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RATHVON
GENEALOGY

By S. M. Sener, Esq.

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SIMON S. RATHVON, PH. D.

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LANCASTER'S OLDEST LIVING DEVOTEE OF SCIENCE.

BY S. M. SENER, ESQ.

Simon S. Rathvon was born at Marietta, this county, on April 24th, 1812. His father was Jacob Rathvon, a gunsmith, who settled in that place in 1810, and died in 1839. His mother was Catharine Myers, of York county, who died at Marietta in 1825. His grandfather was John George Rathvon, born December 7, 1747, died August 7, 1799; and his grandmother was Christine Kraemer, died July 21, 1799, of Warwick township. John George Rathvon was a son of Christian Rathvon, who with a brother, George, settled in Conestoga township, this county, in 1740, having emigrated from either South Germany or Switzerland. The old homestead in Conestoga township is still standing and from there emanated all who bear the same family name.

The name Rathvon has been variously spelled by different branches of the family, but the early members seem to have spelled it Rathvon as is evidenced by the records of the Moravian church, this city.

The subject of this sketch did not particularly differ from other boys of the period with whom he mingled and was taught in a day school kept by a man named John Smith. He was eight years of age when sent to school. Subsequently he was placed under the care of school-masters Samuel Ross and George Briscoe.

*Reprint from CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

Under all of these tutors he received knowledge of how to "read, write and cypher" for a period of about two years all told, and at ten he hired himself out to various farmers in Donegal and Rapho townships, doing such work as his tender years permitted.

On July 9, 1827, he apprenticed himself to John Bell, tailor, of Marietta, for five years, without any stipulation of *schooling*. He served his apprenticeship out faithfully. Fond of reading, however, he was loaned books by Jacob Grosh, Esq., and Abraham N. Cassel, from their private libraries. In 1832 he commenced tailoring on his own account and subsequently went to Philadelphia, but returned to Marietta and carried on his trade there until he removed with his family to this city in 1848, and to-day may be seen actively engaged at the "bench."

Dr. Rathvon, in the summer of 1842, began the study of entomology, having been attracted to that study by an incident which the Doctor narrates in his own style as follows:

"I was one day sauntering along the banks of the Chiquesalunga when I encountered two men engaged in frog shooting. One of them had just shot a large frog and he called my attention to it, from the fact that, although he had shot the whole head off, the reptile seemed to toss its body about with unabated vigor. I soon discovered that there was something within it that produced its peculiar movements and on opening it I found its stomach was occupied by a large black, living beetle, also two dead ones, and several fragments of similar beetles. These beetles were entirely new to me, and of no ordinary character. I secured them and when I reached home I impaled them amongst my other insects. Although I had previously been interested in mineralogy, and somewhat in ornithology, I did not know of a collector nor

a collection of insects in the world. One day the late Professor Haldenian, of 'Chiques Rock,' came into my shop, as he always did when in town, when his keen eyes immediately fell with delight upon my small collection. He informed me that the large black beetles were *Xyloryctes satyrus*; that they belonged to the order *Coleoptera*, and the family SCARABIDÆ in the division LAMELLICORNIA. That definition was about as 'clear as mud' to me, and he recognized it with a grim smile."

Prior to 1842, in 1837, Dr. Rathvon had evinced a taste for natural science and was a member of the Marietta Lyceum of Natural History. It might be well said that he was born an entomologist, for when but five years of age an amusing incident occurred which he to-day frequently narrates as follows:

"* * * My *first* entomological experience, and it appears as fresh in my memory as it did the day on which it occurred, was in the month of June, 1817, when I was a little over five years of age. My father led me into an open chapparel, a short distance from our house, containing dwarfed sassafras, paw-paw, locust, wild cherry, and other trees and shrubbery, to show me the "Seventeen-year locust." There were thousands of them on the low plants within my reach. Unknown to him I captured perhaps a dozen of them which I put into my red-leather hat, and clapped it on my head. When I returned home and took off my hat the locusts were all tangled in the hair of my head, and my mother, and some of the neighbors who were present, indulged in a first-class terror; giving me a rough brushing, expelling the insects and tramping them under foot; of course, I did not know what it all meant, but I was subsequently informed that they could, and would sting, and that their sting was fatal."

Dr. Rathvon has seen and freely handled the

"Seventeen-year locust," in 1817, 1834, 1851, 1868, 1885 and was never stung by them.

Dr. Rathvon has been a busy writer upon scientific and kindred topics and his first composition was published in 1844 in *The Argus*, a weekly paper published in Marietta. Since then his contributions have been numbered by hundreds and they have appeared in the local press, literary journals, magazines, and in State and National agricultural reports.

Dr. Rathvon was one of the founders of the Linnaean Society in 1862, and for a period of twenty-eight years has been treasurer of the same. He also helped to found the Lancaster County Agricultural and Horticultural Society. In addition he is a corresponding member of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, American Entomological Society, and numerous other similar organizations. He has been recognized as an authority on entomological topics by such men as Leconte and Cope, and several species of insects have been named after him. A few years ago he was honored by Franklin and Marshall College by having the title of Ph. D. conferred upon him by that institution.

Dr. Rathvon was married on May 27, 1834, to Catharine Freyberger, and had a family of seven sons and four daughters. His early ancestors were of the Moravian faith, but Dr. Rathvon is a member of the New Jerusalem or Swedenborgian church, of which he has been Reader for some years.

As a scientist he is an ardent student and lover of nature. As a writer upon entomological topics he is justly entitled to rank amongst the first investigators of the country. He is diligent and devoted to the pursuit of his favorite study, and perhaps there is no instance in America of such an incessant, self-sacrificing pursuit of knowledge, under adverse circum-

stances, as his has been. After the ordinary business labors of the day are finished he spends every night almost in his cosy study, at his home on North Queen street, until eleven or twelve o'clock, and when younger and less feeble than now, until one, two and three o'clock, when he would retire and at the usual hour in the morning be found at his place of business. With his ardor and application, but for adverse surroundings and obstacles, a high niche in the temple of fame would have been his. With all the difficulties which beset his pathway he outstripped others more favorably circumstanced. Of him *The New Era* recently said, editorially: "All honor, then, we say, to such quiet and unobtrusive but useful citizens as Dr. Rathvon, who deserves a fitting testimonial from those whom he has entertained and instructed without reward, or hope of reward."

His has been the school of difficulties and his labors have not been remunerated by *one cent* of pecuniary gain, but, if justly dealt with, he should long ago have received an appointment as State Entomologist. When being instructed in his first lesson in entomology by the late Dr. S. S. Haldeman, that gentleman informed him that he had recently (in 1842) come into possession of the collection of, the late Professor Hentz, of Alabama, and invited him to come and see it. Of course he availed himself of the opportunity to do so, and that visit inoculated him with the *virus* of entomology. Subsequently Dr. Haldeman consolidated the Hentz collection with one that he made himself, the former being mainly Southern species. Long years thereafter Dr. Rathvon came into possession of that consolidated collection and incorporated it with his own, consisting of American and foreign species, so that all that remains of the Hentz-Haldeman collection is now in the collection

of Dr. Rathvon, and the specimen of *Xyloryctes satyrus* taken from the stomach of a frog eight and forty years ago, remains intact, and constitutes the nucleus around which cluster ten thousand species of *coleoptera* from Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America, Australia, and the West India Islands.

Dr. Rathvon has not even labored for applause but for an unselfish love of nature, and freely has he imparted his knowledge to all who sought for information from him, as did the writer of this sketch twenty-two years ago, since which time I have been proud to be classed as an humble friend and pupil of one whose example and life are worthy of imitation, and if a higher reward than mere earthly be the lot of devoted aspiration to science by the subject of this sketch, a large inheritance, in heaven will be his portion.

ANCESTRY OF DR. RATHVON.

The following includes the births, deaths and marriages of the early ancestors of Dr. Rathvon, as compiled by the writer, from the records of the Moravian Church, this city, by permission of Rev. J. Max Hark, D.D., pastor of the church:

John George Rathvon; born December 7, 1747; married to Christine Kraemer on April 10, 1773; had six sons and ——— daughters, of whom one son died before; lived six miles from Lancaster, in Conestoga township; died August 7, 1799, aged 58 years, 8 months; was a gunsmith by occupation. Was a son of Frederick Rathvon. Baptized January 7, 1748; sponsors, Lou Bender, et ux. Buried in Moravian Cemetery, city.

Christine Rathvon, daughter of Michael and Elizabeth Kraemer, born ——— ——— ———; married John George Rathvon, above stated; died July 21, 1799,

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aged 47 years, 2 months and 18 days. Buried in Moravian Cemetery, city. Had issue:

Christine, born September 20, 1775.

George, born March 21, 1777.

Elizabeth, born November 8, 1779.

Jacob, born June 23, 1785. His grandfather, Frederick, was sponsor. Father of Dr. S. S. Rathvon.

Michael, born August 31, 1787. His grandfather, Michael Kraemer, was a sponsor.

Susanna, born October 23, 1789. Michael and Elizabeth Kraemer, sponsors.

Maria, born February 14, 1792.

Johannes, born August 31, 1794.

David, born November 28, 1797.

A *beatus*—still-born son; born and died in 1783; buried in Moravian Cemetery, city. No record whatever of the eleventh child mentioned in death records of J. G. and C. Rathvon.

Family of John Leonhard Rathvon, son of Christopher; married December 5, 1769, to Christine Kraemer. Lived in Manor township. Had issue:

Christine, born July 21, 1771.

Johannes, born November 5, 1773. His grandfather, Christopher, was a sponsor.

Catharine, born January 23, 1777.

Susanna, born April 10, 1779.

Elizabeth, born November 12, 1781.

Leonhard, born February 12, 1786.

Marriages—George Rathvon, of Yorke-Town, to Louisa Hartaffel, on April 20, 1773.

Michael, sixth child of J. G. and Christine Rathvon, was married on April 20, 1813, to Polly Frey, daughter of Conrad and Elizabeth Frey, nee Stauffer.

Anna Elizabeth Rathvon married to Andreas Grosch, on August 22, 1769.

Birth—Maria Catharine (Christine), daughter of John George Rathvon and Eva Barbara Rathvon (Heygelmans), on February 11, 1774.

By reference to the above list it will be seen that both John George and John Leonhard married a Christine Kraemer, possibly aunt and niece or cousins. The two ancestors, Frederick and Christopher Rathvon, came to this country about 1740. The above compilation will be of value to all who today bear the name Rathvon as it includes the original ancestry of all of that name in this country. Of the two brothers (Frederick and Christopher) who first came to this country, there are not many data in existence, such as death or other records, the entries in the church records beginning with John George and John Leonhard, who were cousins. John George Rathvon was a Lieutenant in the Continental forces during the Revolution.

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